

# WELSH HEALTH CIRCULAR



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

**Issue Date:** 19 December 2019

**STATUS: ACTION**

**CATEGORY: PUBLIC HEALTH**

**Title:** Changes to the infant pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV) immunisation schedule.

**Date of Expiry / Review** N/A

**For Action by:**

General Practitioners  
Immunisation Leads, Health Boards/Trusts  
Chief Executives, Health Boards/Trusts  
Medical Directors, Health Boards/Trusts  
Directors of Primary, Community and Mental Health, Health Boards  
Nurse Executive Directors, Health Boards/Trusts  
Directors of Public Health, Health Boards  
Chief Executive, Public Health Wales  
Executive Director of Public Health Services, Public Health Wales  
Nurse Director, Public Health Wales  
Head Vaccine Preventable Disease Programme, Public Health Wales  
NHS Wales Informatics Service

**For information to:**

Directors of Workforce and Organisational Development, Health Boards/Trusts  
Chief Pharmacists, Health Boards/Trusts  
Midwifery leads  
Health visitor leads

**Sender:**

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**Enclosure(s):**

Dear Colleague

This letter provides information on the forthcoming changes to the infant pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV) programme. I encourage you to share this guidance with all those who will be involved in helping to deliver the national childhood immunisation schedule in your area.

As you are aware, PCV became part of the routine childhood vaccination programme in 2006 to offer protection against seven pneumococcal serotypes. In 2010, the pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV7) was changed to one that offered protection against 13 pneumococcal serotypes (PCV13, Prevenar 13<sup>®</sup>). These vaccines were administered following a 2 + 1 schedule at 8 and 16 weeks with a booster dose given at 12 to 13 months.

Following a review of the effectiveness of the UK programme, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has concluded that the PCV programme has been highly successful. High vaccine uptake, combined with good vaccine effectiveness, has mitigated against infection in those vaccinated and the wider population through indirect population protection. The JCVI has recommended that the current 2 + 1 PCV schedule can be changed to a 1 +1 schedule.

**All infants born on or after 1 January 2020 will be offered a 1 + 1 PCV schedule. This will be a single dose of PCV13 at 12 weeks of age (alongside the routine DTaP/IPV/Hib/HepB and rotavirus immunisations) followed by a PCV13 booster at 12 to 13 months.**

#### **Key points about the changes to the programme**

- The same vaccine that is currently used for the infant programme (Prevenar 13<sup>®</sup>, which helps protect against invasive disease caused by pneumococcal serotypes 1, 3, 4, 5, 6A, 6B, 7F, 9V, 14, 18C, 19A, 19F, and 23F) will continue to be used.
- Infants born on or after 1 January 2020 should be offered Prevenar 13<sup>®</sup> as a 1+1 schedule at 12 weeks with a booster dose at 12 to 13 months.
- Infants born on or before 31 December 2019 should remain on the previous 2 +1 schedule at 8 and 16 weeks with a booster dose at 12 to 13 months.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all involved for their continuing hard work in delivering immunisation programmes to infants.

Yours sincerely,



**Dr Frank Atherton**  
**Chief Medical Officer / Medical Director NHS Wales**

## Additional information

- A summary of key issues relating to the changes in the schedule is set out in **Annex A**.
- Details of how the COVER programme (the routine quarterly and annual childhood vaccine coverage data collection) will be modified to capture data on uptake of the first dose of PCV vaccine are set out in **Annex B**
- A revised version of the information leaflet 'Pneumococcal vaccine for children under two years' will be available to order from <https://phw.nhs.wales/services-and-teams/health-information-resources/> prior to the schedule changes taking effect.
- Further detailed information for healthcare professionals including a training presentation and 'Changes to the infant pneumococcal conjugate vaccine schedule - information for healthcare practitioners' will be available on the Public Health Wales pneumococcal webpage from January 2020:  
<http://nww.immunisation.wales.nhs.uk/pneumococcal-disease>
- An updated patient group direction (PGD) template from Public Health England for the administration of PCV will be available for NHS Wales to use when developing their own PGDs ahead of the requirement to administer a scheduled PCV dose at 12 weeks of age to those born on or after 1 January 2020.
- The pneumococcal chapter of the Green Book ('Immunisation against infectious disease') will be published in December 2019. Publication will be made available here: [Pneumococcal chapter of the Green Book](#)
- The JCVI minutes from June 2018 (page 12-16) recommending the change to the infant PCV programme are available at:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/joint-committee-on-vaccination-and-immunisation#minutes>

## Guidance on immunisation of infants with pneumococcal conjugate vaccine

1. This guidance is based on advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), the UK's independent advisory committee of immunisation experts. Full guidance will be available in the updated chapter on pneumococcal disease included in the 'Green Book' ('Immunisation against infectious disease').

### Timing

2. The PCV13 (Prevenar 13<sup>®</sup>) vaccine will continue to be offered to all infants. Those born on or after 1 January 2020 will follow the new schedule. The vaccine will continue to be available to order through the ImmForm website.
3. For infants born on or after 1 January 2020:
  - The first dose should be given at 12 weeks of age, at the same time as the second set of primary immunisations.
  - As the immunogenicity of a single dose of PCV13 is lower when given at a younger age, any dose given before 12 weeks of age will not be counted and another dose should be given once the infant reaches 12 weeks of age, allowing at least four weeks between the two PCV13 doses.
  - The booster dose should be given at 12 to 13 months.
  - The minimum time between the primary dose and the booster dose should ideally be 8 weeks. This can be reduced to a 4-week interval if the primary dose is not given until 11 months of age so that immunisations due at one year of age are not delayed.
  - Children who start the immunisation schedule after their first birthday should be given a single PCV13 dose.

All unimmunised or partially immunised healthy children remain eligible for PCV13 up to their second birthday. Routine immunisation with PCV13 is not offered after the second birthday unless the individual is at increased risk of pneumococcal disease (see Green Book Pneumococcal chapter (chapter 25) for risk groups).

For advice on at risk groups, incomplete vaccination and those vaccinated abroad, please see the Green Book chapter and 'Changes to the infant pneumococcal conjugate vaccine schedule - information for healthcare practitioners' on PHW's webpage.

### Patient Group Directions

4. An updated PGD template from Public Health England for the administration of the PCV will be available for NHS Wales to use as a reference resource when developing their own PGD ahead of the requirement to administer a scheduled PCV dose at 12 weeks of age to those born on or after 1 January 2020.

## **Child Health Information Services (CHIS)**

5. NHS Wales Informatics Service (NWIS) has updated the Child Health systems to allow for call and recall of infants for this new schedule. Healthcare professionals administering the vaccine must ensure that information on vaccines administered is documented in the general practice record and parent held record. The healthcare professional must ensure that information on vaccines administered is submitted directly to the health board Child Health Office within 7 days.

Arrangements continue to be required to inform neighbouring areas when children resident in their area are immunised outside their local area through the child health system.

Data to monitor vaccine uptake will be collected through the Child Health System in the same way that data for existing childhood immunisation programmes are collected. Immunisation uptake will be reported through the Public Health Wales COVER scheme.

For accurate monitoring of immunisation uptake, it is essential that completed lists for scheduled vaccination sessions are returned to health board Child Health Offices in a timely manner. It is also essential that any unscheduled Prevenar<sup>®</sup> vaccines given opportunistically are reported to health board Child Health Offices using an unscheduled form. Timely return of immunisation forms from General Practice is not only important for immunisation uptake monitoring, but also because late return of forms may have consequences for the Child Health System in appointing children for future immunisations.

## **Funding and service arrangements**

6. The Directions to Local Health Boards as to the Statement of Financial Entitlements Directions 2013 will be amended in early 2020 to reflect the new delivery requirements. The payment arrangements will remain unchanged.

## **Communications and information for parents, caregivers and health professionals**

7. A patient information flyer and a revised leaflet have been produced for parents and caregivers, to support the change of the vaccine programme. The flyer is available for download only and the leaflet will be available to order from: <https://phw.nhs.wales/services-and-teams/health-information-resources/>
8. A document entitled 'Changes to the infant pneumococcal conjugate vaccine schedule - information for healthcare practitioners' which provides further information in relation to programme eligibility, scheduling and vaccine

administration will be available from January 2020 on:  
<http://nww.immunisation.wales.nhs.uk/pneumococcal-disease>

9. The PCV vaccine information for parents on the NHS Direct Wales website will be updated and will be available [here](#).
10. Training slides detailing the schedule change will be available on the Public Health Wales Immunisation training resource page.

## **COVER programme vaccine coverage data collection**

The Coverage of Vaccine Evaluated Rapidly (COVER) programme is responsible for the data collection in Wales of local authority (LA) and GP level immunisation coverage data from the national Community Child Health Information System (CCH2000/CYPrIS) for children aged one, two and five years of age.

Two dose coverage of PCV vaccine evaluated at 12 months and booster coverage at 24 months has been part of the routine quarterly COVER programme since PCV vaccine was introduced in the routine childhood immunisation programme in 2006.

To continue accurately monitoring the coverage of PCV vaccine coverage at 12 months of age the COVER programme will be modified to also collect coverage of the first dose of PCV. Specifications for the revised collection of vaccine coverage data through COVER will be disseminated by NWIS.